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ABSTRACT

On the premise that formal parent education courses may improve parental attitudes and competence, provide needed support, and reverse the trend of social problems faced by our children, this instructional plan describes a university course on parenting for graduate and undergraduate students which incorporates a cooperative learning approach to explore parenting issues and to promote effective parenting skills. Although the skill-oriented concepts of cooperative learning, skill-building, and attitudinal change comprise the core of the course, an understanding of the theoretical concepts of adult learning principles, cultural and societal influences, approaches and models, self awareness, parental roles and family structures and functions are also emphasized. Described in the instructional plan are the course learning outcomes, instructional strategies related to each learning outcome, evaluation of student learning and course instruction, course outline and schedule, and course bibliography. Five appendices describe course assignments and the contract grading system. (KDFB)

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PARENTING: A SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

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McGill University

April 16, 1996

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1. INTRODUCTION

In a survey of parents' attitudes and beliefs, Schultz et al. (1980) reported that 75% of the 30,000 respondents believed that parenting keeps getting more difficult. In the North American society of today, we have been witness to a significant increase in social problems facing our children and adolescents. Some of the growing problems include low self-esteem, drug use, depression, addictions, violence, and even suicide.

It has been widely accepted by social psychologists and by social anthropologists that parents play a major role in the formation of their childrens' personality and that these roles contribute in making them the primary source of influence during their childrens' formative years (Levitt & Cohen, 1976). Despite the obvious importance of being a competent parent, education in this area is conspicuously lacking.

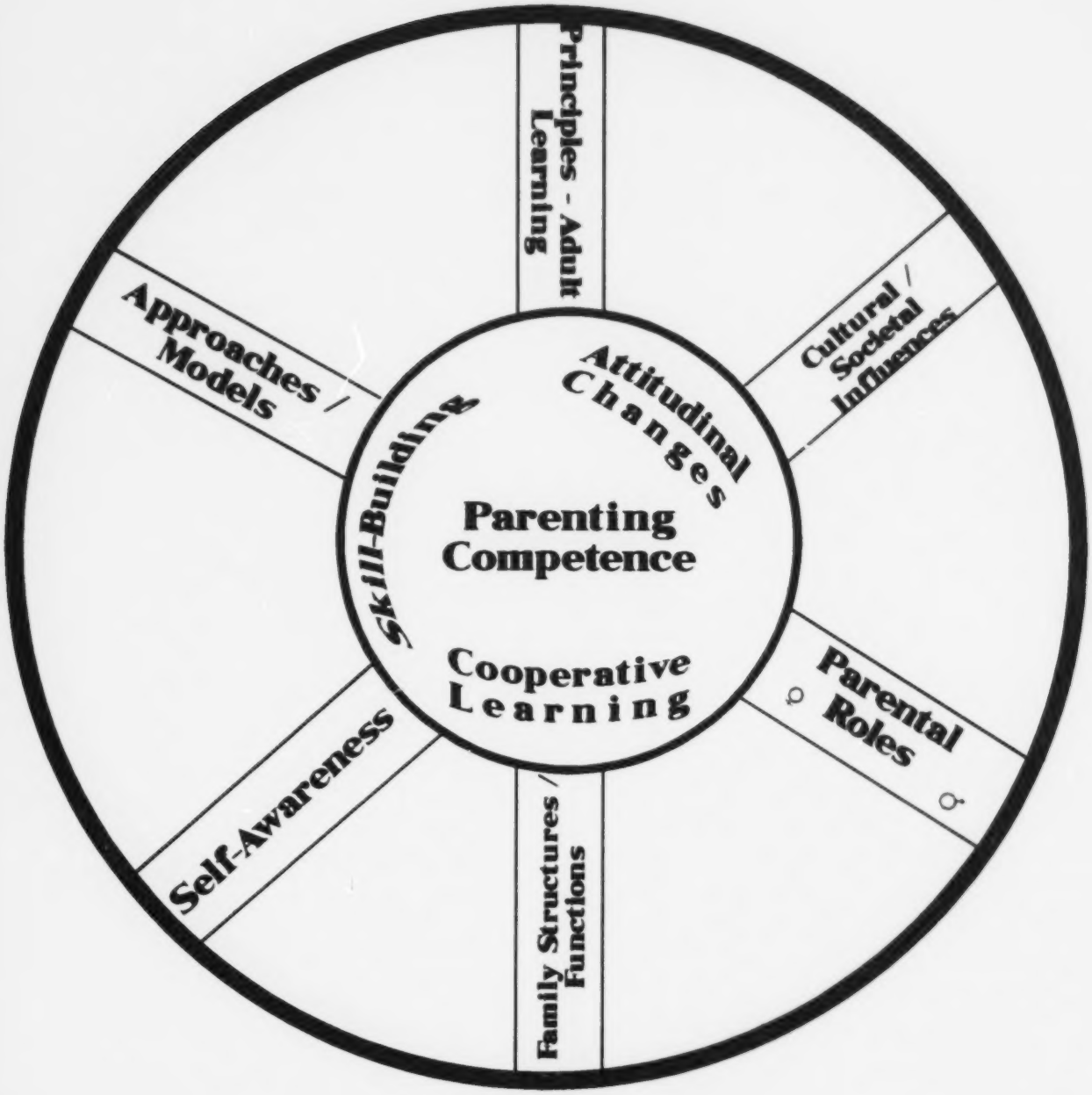
The dynamics within the North American family have gone through major transitions in recent decades. The incidence of divorce, the increase in unemployment, the numbers of children being raised in single-parent, step-parent, same-sex parents, and blended families, the increased number of employed mothers, the reduction of extended family and neighbourhood support systems, and modern technology have all had an effect on the important transmission of important socialization skills from parents to their offspring.

It is my belief that providing formal parent education courses may help to improve parental attitudes and competence, provide the much needed support parents and future parents require, and reverse the growing trend of social problems faced by our children and youth. It is with this goal in mind that I have designed the course, **Parenting: A**

Social Perspective.

This 3-credit course, designed for undergraduate or graduate students in the Human Relations and Family Life Program, primarily incorporates a cooperative learning approach in order to explore parenting issues and to promote effective parenting skills. It is well-suited for the student who plans to either be a parent in the future, is presently a parent, or may need to interact and support parents as a function of his or her professional responsibilities. Through the exploration of a variety of parenting issues, the students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the influences affecting the parenting process. The objective of this course is to help students incorporate this understanding with the experiential learning of effective parenting skills in order to promote competent parenting.

CONCEPT MAP: **PARENTING: A SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE**



NELLA HERSCOVITCH

FEB. 6, 1996

11. COURSE CONCEPTS

In this course the students will explore six important theoretical concepts in order to understand their impact on the primary course objective - the promotion of effective parenting skills. The course concept map on the previous page has been designed to help visualize the relationship between the six theoretical concepts and the four parenting skill concepts. The map shows the practical, or skill-oriented concepts as the core of the course. These concepts, "skill-building," attitudinal changes," and "cooperative learning," were placed inside the inner circle, and appropriately depict the focus of this course. In the middle of this circle, "parenting competence" will reinforce to the students the end-product or goal of the course.

In order to master the skill-oriented concepts, the students must have a clear understanding of the various theoretical concepts which affect parenting. Therefore, these concepts were placed in the outer circle and feed into the core of the course. Included in these peripheral concepts are: "principles of adult learning," "cultural and societal influences," "approaches and models," "self-awareness," "parental roles," and "family structures and functions." Examining these concepts separately and together helps the student understand the global impact of the various influences in shaping adults for their role as parents. The outer circle reinforces the close relationship between the theoretical concepts affecting parenting, while the inner circle emphasizes the focus of the course through its inclusion of the processes which needed to be mastered in order to meet the course objectives. This inner circle is situated inside the outer circle, with its theoretical concepts extending towards and joining it. This signifies the integration between the

theoretical and the skill-oriented concepts, which together comprise this course concept map.

The course instructional plan begins with the concept map, which will provide the students with meaningful insights into the subject matter of this course. It, not only will be used as an introduction to the course, but will also serve as a springboard to how and when topics will be addressed, and will guide the development of student learning outcomes, instructional strategies, and evaluation procedures.

111. COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, each student should be able to:

1. Examine his or her values and attitudes vis à vis parenting.
2. Describe in detail at least one principle of adult learning and be able to relate this to the learning of parenting.
3. Describe the impact of cultural and societal influences on parenting
4. Appraise various parenting approaches and models.
5. Describe how parental roles change throughout the life cycle of both parent and child.
6. List 5 different family structures.
7. Describe the effect of changing family structures and technology on family functioning.
8. Display cooperative behavior in small groups.
9. Given parent-child scenarios, demonstrate effective communication, cooperative, and problem-solving skills, either through role play or through appropriate written responses.

10. Define and explain parental competence.

1V. COURSE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

The following represents (a) the different learning outcomes written for this course; (b) the domain and level of learning ; and (c) the proposed instructional strategies in order that students master the learning outcomes.

For each learning outcome, consideration was given to the requirements and complexity of the task, and this information led to the appropriate instructional strategies. The learning outcomes stemming from the theoretical concepts, represented in the outer circle of the concept map, will be addressed one at a time during the first half of the semester. These will form the theoretical background for a comprehensive knowledge base about the different influences which impact on the development of a parent. The final four learning outcomes stemming from the skill concepts, represented in the inner circle of the concept map, will be covered throughout the course. Mastery of the "skill" learning outcomes is paramount and consequently, the students will be provided with many opportunities to practice them.

-Examine his or her values and attitudes vis à vis parenting.

Domain & Level of Learning: Cognitive; Analysis

Instructional Strategies: Lecturette;
Cooperative Learning Group (Think/pair/share);
Class discussion

-Describe in detail at least one principle of adult learning and be able to relate this to the learning of parenting.

Domain & Level of Learning: Cognitive; comprehension & application

Instructional Strategies: Lecture;

General class discussion in response to instructor's questioning

- Describe the impact of cultural and societal influences on parenting.

Domain & Level of Learning: Cognitive; comprehension

Instructional Strategies: Lecturette;

Horseshoe discussion groups;

Class discussion

-Describe how parental roles change throughout the life cycle of both parent and child.

Domain & Level of Learning: Cognitive; comprehension

Instructional Strategy: Class discussion

-Describe 5 different family structures.

Domain & Level of Learning: Cognitive; knowledge

Instructional Strategy: Mini-lecture

-Describe the effect of changing family structures and technology on family functioning.

Domain & Level of Learning: Cognitive; valuing

Instructional Strategies: Small group discussion;

Group presentations

- appraise various parenting approaches and models

Domain & Level of Learning: Cognitive; evaluation

Instructional Strategies: Lecture;

Cooperative learning groups;

General class discussion

-Display cooperative behavior in small groups.

-Given parent-child scenarios, demonstrate effective communication and problem-solving skills.

Domain & Level of Learning: Cognitive; synthesis & application

Instructional Strategies: Demonstration;

Case studies / role play;

General class discussion

-Define and explain parental competence

Domain & Level of Learning: Cognitive; knowledge

Instructional Strategies: Questioning by instructor;

Small group discussion:

Class discussion

-Demonstrate parental competence in simulated situations

Domain & Level of Learning: Affective; characterization

Instructional Strategies: Case studies; Role play

V. COURSE EVALUATION

(A) EVALUATION OF STUDENT LEARNING

This course aims to promote competent parenting through the exploration of the influences affecting the parenting process, and especially through the experiential learning of effective parenting skills. Several short **reflection papers, a group presentation,** and **role-playing examinations** will comprise the focus on the methods of evaluation of the course learning outcomes. Because the emphasis of the course is on mastering a set of learning outcomes, the evaluation of learning will be criterion-referenced.

The details of the evaluation process will be negotiated with the students during the first class, with the understanding that there will be a minimum of course outcomes that must be satisfactorily met. The instructor together with the students will choose between a pass/fail grade, or a contract grading system (Appendix E).

Throughout the first half of the semester, students will be invited to explore several concepts influencing the parenting process. Five reflection papers will provide the student with an opportunity to reflect upon these concepts. Evaluation of reflection papers will be based on the clarity and thoughtfulness in the responses to the instructor's questions, and

adherence to length requirements. Appendix A outlines the criteria for Reflection Paper Assignment #1, and is offered in this instructional plan as an example of the general format of all reflection papers.

During the first class, the students will be given an opportunity to organize themselves in groups of approximately four in order to plan a presentation which would depict the effect of changing family structures, technology, and changing parental roles on family functioning. Appendix B shows the criteria that will be utilized in the evaluation of the presentations. Both the student and the instructor will have the opportunity to be involved in the evaluation process.

Simulated situations throughout the course will provide the students with many opportunities to learn and practice effective parenting skills through role-playing exercises. Appendix C shows the criteria which will be used to evaluate the learner's mastery of effective parenting skills. This evaluation will also be done by both the student and the instructor.

The following outlines 10 overall course learning outcomes followed by the evaluation methods, including the weight of the different assignments:

1 - Examine his or her values and attitudes vis à vis parenting.

2 - Describe in detail at least one principle of adult learning and be able to relate this to the learning of parenting.

3 - Describe the impact of cultural and societal influences on parenting.

4 - Appraise various parenting approaches and models.

5 - Define and explain parental competence.

Evaluation Methods: - Formative

- Summative
- **5 Reflection papers** (2 typewritten pages each)
- 25% of final grade.....Appendix A shows the criteria for the evaluation of reflection papers, using learning outcome # 1 as an example.

6 - Describe how parental roles change throughout the life cycle of both parent and child.

7 - Describe the effect of changing family structures and technology on family functioning.

8 - Display cooperative behavior in small groups.

Evaluation Methods: - Formative

- Summative
- Rating scale and anecdotal comments on **group presentation**
- 25%-instructor evaluation; 10%-student evaluation. Appendix B

9 - List 5 different family structures.

Evaluation Methods: - Formative:

-One page **summary**

10 - Given parent-child scenarios, demonstrate effective communication, cooperative and problem-solving skills.

Evaluation Methods: - Formative

- Summative

- **Role-playing observation form**

- 30%-instructor evaluation; 10% student evaluation.. Appendix C

(B) EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTION

The instructor will provide students with an opportunity to offer feedback on her teaching performance, the sequencing of content, and the effectiveness of the instructional strategies. This oral (through discussion) and written feedback (through a short questionnaire) will be requested midway through the course in order that there be time to implement appropriate modifications to the course, if necessary. Informal as well as formal course evaluation (carried out by the University) will be done at the final class session.

VI. COURSE OUTLINE

The following tentative course outline will be provided to students during the first class.

Parenting: A Social Perspective
416-5XX
Fall 199?
Instructor: Nella Edel-Herscovitch
Office: Anywhere
Phone: 339-1330
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course, each student should be able to:

1. Examine his or her values and attitudes vis à vis parenting.
2. Describe in detail at least one principle of adult learning and be able to relate this to the learning of parenting.
3. Describe the impact of cultural and societal influences on parenting.
4. Appraise various parenting approaches and models.
5. Describe how parental roles change throughout the life cycle of both parent and child.
6. List 5 different family structures.
7. Describe the effect of changing family structures and technology on family functioning.
8. Display cooperative behavior in small groups.
9. Given parent-child scenarios, demonstrate effective communication, cooperative, and problem- solving skills, either through role play or through appropriate written responses.

10. Define and explain parental competence.

TEXT: (Tentative)

Selected chapters from: Fine, M. J. (Ed.). (1989). **The second handbook on parent education: Contemporary perspectives.** Toronto: Academic Press, Inc.

The **COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY** lists some of the required and recommended reading reflecting course topics.

Attendance and Evaluation

This course is a seminar course which involves a high component of observation, participation and involvement. Attendance at classes is essential to the students' learning and to the learning of others. Please let the instructor know if you must miss a class session.

Criteria for evaluation will be provided for each assignment. "Unsatisfactory" reflection papers may be revised and resubmitted anytime before the last class.

Grading

5 reflection papers:	25% of final mark
Group presentation: (illustrating concepts in a creative way, such as a skit)	25% (instructor) 10% (self-evaluation)
Role playing: (following "skill" instruction via case studies)	30% (instructor) 10% (self-evaluation)

PARENTING: A SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE
416-5XX
Contract Grading System

A-

-All 5 reflection papers

-Successful Participation in Group Presentation, including summary

-Given, parent-child scenerios, you have demonstrated effective communication, cooperative, and problem-solving skills

B+

-All of the criteria for an A- except 2 reflection papers

B

-All of the criteria for an A- except 4 reflection papers

B-

-All of the criteria for an A- without any reflection papers

Once you have contracted a certain grade, you can later decide to contract for a lower grade but not a higher one.

Student's signature **Contracted Grade** **Date**

Instructor's signature **Date**

Course Schedule

This schedule will remain flexible to accommodate minor changes.

WEEK	TOPIC	REQUIRED READING (BEFORE CLASS)	OTHER
1	Introduction to the course. Assessing needs, interests. Evaluation / presentations		Course Outline Concept map Decisions
2	Review of students' needs etc. Overview- parenting process. Self-awareness/values	Text: Ch. 1	
3	Principles of Adult Learning. Learning to parent. Reflective listening	Merriam & Caffarella (1991)	Reflection paper #1 due - Appendix A. Appendix D
4	Cultural/societal influences.	Jarvis (1987) Text: Ch. 7	Reflection paper #2 due
5	Approaches/models. Cooperative learning.	Dembo et al. (1985) Edel-Herscovitch (1995) Schultz et al. (1980)	Reflection paper #3 due
6	Life cycle - parent/child. Parental roles.	Carter & McGoldrick (1981).	Reflection paper #4 due
7	Family Structures. Technological change. Midsession course evaluation.	Text: Ch. 14	One-page summary Group presentation
8	Family Functioning.	Text: Ch. 15	Group Presentation
9	Communication skills. "I-messages".	Faber & Maazlish (1980)	Case studies; Group Presentation
10	Problem-solving skills. Conflict resolution.		Case Studies; Group Presentation
11	Offering choices. Encouraging behaviour. Fostering responsibility	Faber & Maazlish (1980)	Case Studies; Group Presentation
12	Parental competence		Reflection paper #5; Group Presentation
13	Wrap-up		Formal evaluation

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Carter, E. A. and McGoldrick. (1981). The Family Life Cycle: A Framework for Family Therapy. New York: Gardner Press.

Dembo, M. H., Sweitzer, M., & Lauritzen, P. (1985). An evaluation of group parent education: Behavioral, P.E.T., and Adlerian programs. Review of Educational Research, 55, 155-200.

Edel-Herscovitch, N. (1995). A Cooperative Learning Model for Parents. Montreal: McGill University. ERIC, ED 387208.

Faber, A., and Maazlish, E. (1980). How to talk so kids will listen and listen so kids will talk. New York: Rawson, Wade.

Fine, M. J. (Ed.). (1989). The second handbook on parent education: Contemporary perspectives. Toronto: Academic Press, Inc.

Jarvis, P. (1987). Adult learning in the social context. New York: Croom Helm.

Levitt, E. and Cohen, S. (1976). Educating parents of children with special needs: Approaches and issues. Young Children, 31, (4), 263-272.

Merriam, S. B. and Caffarella, R. S. (1991). Learning in Adulthood: A comprehensive guide: San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Schultz, C., Nystul, M. & Law, H. (1980). Attitudinal outcomes of theoretical models of parent group education. Journal of Individual Psychology, 36 (1), 16-28.

Appendix A: **Reflection Paper Assignment - #1**

This paper will ask you to examine your attitudes and values concerning parenthood. What are the values and attitudes that you adhere to, how did you develop these attitudes, and how might these affect your parenting style?

In this exploration, trace the roots of this value system. How has your family of origin shaped your values?

Are there any attitudes which you would like to change. If so, what strategies might help you to make the necessary changes?

Length of Paper: No more than two (2) typewritten pages.
Due date: _____

Appendix B: **Group Presentation**

Groups of approximately four (4) students will be responsible for presentations during the class. One hour presentations must address the following in a creative way, such as a skit:

1. how parental roles (male & female) change throughout the lifecycle of both parent and child
2. the effect of changing family structures and technology on family functioning
3. the display of cooperative behavior

A written summary of the presentation, as well as a bibliography must be submitted after the presentation.

The following form will be used as the criteria for evaluation of the presentations:

Name of Student	Group members	Date

Circle the number that best approximates your rating of the behavior exhibited by the group, with 7 representing your highest agreement and 1 representing your lowest agreement with the statement.

1. Group members satisfactorily addressed specified learning outcomes for the presentation.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. Group members contributed equally.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. Parenting issues were presented in a clear, yet innovative way.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. Group members displayed cooperative behavior.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. Your evaluation of the group presentation was excellent (A).
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Comments:

Appendix C:

Name of Student Name of Observer Date

SKILL	FREQUENCY	EXAMPLES
Reflective listening		
blame-free "I-messages"		
Conflict resolution		
Encouraging behaviour		
Fostering responsibility		
Offering choices		
Non-verbal communication		
Problem-solving		
Cooperative behavior		

Comments:

Appendix D: **CASE STUDIES**

SKILL : Acknowledging a child's feelings through REFLECTIVE LISTENING

Objective: **To promote effective communication and a caring attitude by reflecting an understanding of the child's feelings**

Problem # 1:

4 - year old Joey is jealous of his new baby brother.

Father's response:

"Now Joey, you're going to have to be extra good because we have another baby now. You are not the ONLY ONE any more. From now on its going to be YOU AND YOUR BABY BROTHER. Two of you, where there was one before."

Alternate response:

"Joey, your new baby brother will sometimes be fun, but sometimes he will be a nuisance to all of us. You may feel left out. You may feel jealous. When you feel that way, be sure to come and tell me, so that I can give you an extra hug. I want you to know that I love you very much."

Problem # 2:

8 - year old Tammy comes home from school silent, slow, and dragging her feet.

Mother's response:

"What kind of face is that? What did you do this time? Did you lose your best friend?"

Alternate response:

"You're feeling sad about something. It was not a good day for you."

Appendix E: **PARENTING: A SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE**
416-5XX
Contract Grading System

A-

-All 5 reflection papers

-Successful Participation in Group Presentation, including summary

-Given, parent-child scenerios, you have demonstrated effective communication, cooperative, and problem-solving skills

B+

-All of the criteria for an A- except 2 reflection papers

B

-All of the criteria for an A- except 4 reflection papers

B-

-All of the criteria for an A- without any reflection papers

Once you have contracted a certain grade, you can later decide to contract for a lower grade but not a higher one.

Student's signature **Contracted Grade** **Date**

Instructor's signature **Date**